

The Peninsula SPORT

Friday 24 February 2017

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H H the Emir's Sword Festival: O Peslier guides Majeed to glory

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Jockey O Peslier guided Majeed towards the victory in an epic battle which saw them bagging the top prize of QR 85,500 on the opening day of the prestigious H H the Emir's Sword Racing Festival yesterday.

In a closely contested battle for the Qatar Local Purebred Arabian Trophy, Majeed, trained by A. de Mieuille was ahead of AJS Al Rayyan, ridden by Harry Bentley who finished second to win QR 33,000 while Marco Monteriso, guided by Reda completed the top three positions of the event at the Al Rayyan Racecourse last night.

Adhamm ridden by Eduardo Pedrosa accounted for the top prize of QR 17,100 in the Thoroughbred Handicap (Class 3) event while Harry Bentley guided Hope Cove to



Victorious horse Majeed's owner and Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club officials pose for a photograph during the H H the Emir's Sword Racing Festival at Al Rayyan Racecourse yesterday.

the second position ahead of Palmetto Dunes, ridden by Marco Monteriso.

Thoroughbred Handicap (Class 5) event was won by Hillside Dream from Ireland, ridden by Harry

Bentley ahead of, Substantiate and Red Connect who came in second and third respectively.

The Emir's Sword Racing action continues today with eight races on the cards.

2017 H H THE EMIR'S SWORD FESTIVAL - DAY 1

Longines World Fegentri Championship - For Lady Riders

Final position: Horse (Country), Trainer/Jockey

- 1: Namroud (QA) Pierre Deymonaz/Elisabetta Marcialis
- 2: Taima (QA) A. de Mieuille/Larissa Bliess
- 3: Falot Del Falot (FR) Hassan Al Matwi/Bethany Baumgardner

Purebred Arabian Cup

1: Caid De L'Arduis (FR) Jassim Mohammed Ghazali/Harry Bentley

- 2: She'ris (QA) Julian Smart/Alberto Sanina
- 3: Hagwa (QA) Julian Smart/Marco Monteriso

Thoroughbred Maiden Plate (Class 6)

1: Thornjyke (GB) Mohammed Jassim Ghazali/Harry Bentley

- 2: Moussein (GB) Ibrahim Al Malki/Saleem Golam
- 3: Prett's Song (IRE) H. Al Ramzani/Faleh Bughanaim

Purebred Arabian Maiden Plate

1: Al Mirzem (QA) H. Aashoor/Andrew Elliot

2: Dese (FR) A. de Mieuille/Jean Baptiste Hamel

3: Mohssn (GB) Julian Smart/Alberto Sanina

Thoroughbred Handicap (Class 5)

1: Hillside Dream (IRE) Jassim Mohammed Ghazali/Harry Bentley

2: Substantiate (GB) Jassim Mohammed Ghazali/Almotassen Al Balushi

3: Red Connect (GB) H. Al Ramzani/Adnan Hawa

Thoroughbred Handicap (Class 3)

1: Adham (IRE) Ibrahim Al Malki/Eduardo Pedrosa

2: Hope Cove (GB) Jassim Mohammed Ghazali/Harry Bentley

3: Palmetto Dunes (USA) Deborah Mountain/Marco Monteriso

Qatar Local Purebred Arabian Trophy

1: Majeed (QA) A. de Mieuille/O Peslier

2: AJS Al Rayyan (QA) Jassim Mohammed Ghazali/Harry Bentley

3: Reda (QA) Julian Smart/Marco Monteriso

Qatar 2022 will leave a lasting legacy: Infantino

The Peninsula

One year after his last visit, FIFA President Gianni Infantino returned to Qatar last week for an Executive Football Summit. Designed to bring together member association presidents and general secretaries to discuss strategic matters, the two-day Doha summit was the latest in a series of global workshops designed to foster greater collaboration.

Speaking to Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy's (SC) official web site, Infantino highlighted how impressed he has been at the legacy plans of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

"The legacy of this World Cup hasn't just been evident over the past two days but for a long time now. One of the key pillars of the organisation of the SC is linked to legacy and football projects in different countries around the world. What has been done with these projects, which were presented to the Member Associations last week and impressed all of them, is not just about education values and producing professional players who can play in the World Cup. It's about what we can do and what Qatar is doing, for young boys and girls who can play football and enjoy its core values through education which is hugely important," Infantino said.

"I'm sure many (Member Associations who were in Qatar) were not aware of the full legacy plans and it's good that they were able to hear about them first-hand. This is the sort of information that gets lost when you speak about organising such a big event as people tend to focus on stadiums or airports and hotels. They want to talk about the big things you can see and touch. They don't always see the additional work which is why these presentations were very important," Infantino said.

"I spoke with the associations about these issues of course and

it was great to see representatives from Qatar exchanging contact details with their counterparts, which I am sure will lead to working on various activities together in the future. I think the best example of seeing this kind of relationship in practice is to look at the Nordic FAs that came to Qatar last year. They were very impressed by what they saw and they expressed this after their meeting."

"No matter what happens, 2022 will leave a lasting legacy because it is the first World Cup to be organised in the Middle East. It is the first time an Arab country will have hosted the tournament and this is important as we live in a time when we need to highlight respect and inclusion. It will also take place during a different time of the year which is something else that will make the event very unique," the FIFA boss said.

"What the future of the World Cup will look like we will have to wait and see. We still don't know if there will be one host or two hosts, so time will tell. However, we are very much looking forward to this World Cup because it will be something really special," Infantino said.



No matter what happens, 2022 will leave a lasting legacy because it is the first World Cup to be organised in the Middle East: Gianni Infantino



FIFA President Gianni Infantino

"We know everything will be located very closely together and to have the furthest stadiums situated no more than 60 kilometres apart is quite something. Normally a World Cup city would only have matches every three or four days. In 2022 there will be games in a World Cup country the size of a city every day and people will enjoy this concept," he added.

"There has been enormous progress made, (since last time) with the infrastructure and the construction works. Khalifa Stadium is the historic stadium in Qatar. It is a beautiful stadium and it's almost complete. More generally, the construction of the stadiums is progressing at a fast rate which is fantastic to see. As 2022 approaches, we must now move at full speed."

Commenting on the commencement of work to install the modular components on Al Bayt Stadium, Infantino said: "This is extremely satisfying to see. It is part of the legacy we were talking about. Not only is it a beautiful stadium that represents such an iconic part of the Arabic culture, but also the modular structure is a very intelligently designed project that avoids creating a 60,000-seater

monument that you do not need because of Qatar's size. What is left behind can be used by other people after the tournament, so for me that is a concrete example of intelligent, sustainable construction. It is a true testament to the legacy of the work that has been done so far. We are looking forward to the first stadium inspections which will take place from this year."

Generation Amazing, the SC's flagship CSR programme, is another example of the impact this World Cup is having five years before the tournament even begins. How impressed have you been by the impact a programme like this is having so far in advance?

"The rewarding aspect of these projects is you can see they have already started. You can already feel the World Cup and the impact it has on so many people. Even the name of the programme describes its effect. What has already been done in this project is amazing and it is good to embrace these activities so far in advance because they are all part of the project and demonstrate the impact that a World Cup in Qatar will have in this country and around the world.

Hassan Al Thawadi, Secretary General of the SC, spoke last week at Cambridge University about the importance of using football to bring people together. Commenting on that, Infantino said that these are very important points.

"Football is of course just a game but is also so much more than that. There are times like at the moment, when we look around the world and see a lot of tension and fear. Through football we can try and change this and we can try and help people smile. All we want to try to do is let people share moments of joy and happiness because that's what football is about," the FIFA President added.



Ramzy Hamad Al Duhami guides Garlic VH Kapelhof over an obstacle during the CS15* 150cm event of the H H the Emir's Sword International Showjumping Championship at Qatar Equestrian Federation's outdoor arena yesterday. Picture: Lotfi Garsi

Garlic VH Kapelhof sparkles as Al Duhami grabs victory

The Peninsula

Ramzy Hamad Al Duhami yesterday celebrated a timely win as Garlic VH Kapelhof produced a flawless routine as Saudi Arabians swept away podium honours on the opening day of the H H the Emir's Sword International Showjumping Championship.

At the Qatar Equestrian Federation's (QEF) outdoor arena yesterday, Al Duhami, with Garlic van het Kapelhof under the saddle, cleared the hurdles in 62.80 seconds to win the CS15* 150cm event. The 45-year-old 2012 Olympic bronze medalist, took home €15,450 in prize money for his victory.

Saudi's other

riders Abdulrahman Alrajhi and Abdullah Alsharbaty took the second and third place respectively.

Earlier, Alsharbaty had finished second in the CS15* 145 cm class. Colombian Andres Penaloza had emerged victorious with his 10-year-old stallion Tenor De Rouhet. The pair's winning time was 25.19 seconds, which fetched Penaloza €6,150 for his efforts.

In the CS12*, Kuwait rider Rakan Al Hasawi, riding under the FEI, emerged triumphant in both the events.

Alsharbaty timed 25.41 seconds with Woulon L...

In the One round against the clock 130 cm class, Al Hasawi and Dennis finished in 59.08 seconds for a thrilling win.

H H THE EMIR'S SWORD INTERNATIONAL SHOWJUMPING CHAMPIONSHIP: RESULTS

Comp. 1 / CS12*, Two phases, Art. 274.5.3, 120 CM - Prize: €8,000

- 1: DENVER, Rakan Al Hasawi (FEI) 23.85 seconds (€2,000)
- 2: GOLDAN, Mohammed Taleb Al Marri (QAT) 24.90 seconds (€1,600)
- 3: CHALEUR 2, Abdullah Faris Abaalkhalil (KSA) 24.94 seconds (€1,000)

Comp. 2 / CS12*, Table A, One round against the clock, Art. 238.2.1, 130 cm - Prize money: €9,000

- 1: DENNIS, Rakan Al Hasawi (FEI) 59.08 seconds (€2,250)
- 2: CORNELIUS, Saad Alajmi (KSA) 59.75 seconds (€1,800)
- 3: NUMERO UNO - T, Ghanim Nasser Al Qadi (QAT) 61.09 seconds (€1,350)

Comp. 3 / CS15*, Tow phases, Art. 274.5.3, 145 cm - Prize money: €24,600

- 1: TENOR DE ROUHEIT, Andres Penaloza (COL) 25.19 seconds (€6,150)
- 2: WOUOLON L, Abdullah Alsharbaty (KSA) 25.41 seconds (€4,920)
- 3: CHALOU, Emanuele Gaudino (ITA) 25.55 seconds (€3,690)

Comp. 4 / CS15*, Table A, One round against the clock, Art. 238.2.1, 150 cm - Prize money: €51,800

- 1: GARLIC VH KAPELHOF, Ramzy Hamad Al Duhami (KSA) €2,800 seconds (€15,450)
- 2: CHALLI PEPPER VAN DE HELLE, Abdulrahman Alrajhi (KSA) 0 64.97seconds (€12,360)
- 3: DOMINGO, Abdullah Alsharbaty (KSA) 66.00 seconds (€9,270)

Qatar Rugby Sevens team ready for Asian battle



Qatar national Rugby Sevens team poses for a photo. The team will take part in the next month's Asia Rugby Sevens Trophy to be held in Doha.

The Peninsula

Qatar national Rugby Sevens team, a blend of experienced and young talent is itching to deliver the goods at next month's Asia Rugby Sevens Trophy to be held in Doha.

Players from all the domestic clubs were invited to the national teams trials and training sessions to select the best available players for the mega tournament.

The Asia Rugby Sevens Trophy which will be held from March 3 to 4. The Qatar team's players vary in age and indigenous backgrounds which reflect the diverse sporting culture of Qatar.

The youngest player in the fold is rookie Sharith Amit, a dynamic powerful back standing at 6'11 tall and weighing 85kg. The youngster managed to catch the eyes of selectors during the QR7's league with his menacing defence and natural ability.

On the other end of the scale is 30 years old local boy and captain Mubarak Al Malik who made his rugby sevens debut in 2006 when Qatar hosted the Asia Games.

Over the years Mubarak has developed into a versatility and transition player.

The current squad managed to balance last season's player exodus by picking up some fresh and talented players including Luke Ward (scrum half) and David Ford (forward). Both players are XV's specialists and will bring their own style of rugby to sevens.

Backed by vice captain and dual rugby representative Tom Featherstone the forwards have a ton of agility and look dangerously ferocious.

Another local veteran is Abdul Karim Al Muhannadi he will coalesce with fast men Maciej Jan Lenartowicz, Rakan Al Mutwaa and Omar Bahmed who can turn the defense inside out.

They all have the potential ability to cause mayhem for the defence and their play can be game changers. Also worth mentioning are exciting new players, Issac Banks, Boubker LQebch and Ismaail Elhathi.

Banks whose been knocking on national selection for years will finally taste international competition and get an opportunity to prove ability. Banks is an endurance player with plenty of skill and speed.

QRF President Yousef Al Kuwari congratulated all the players on their achievement and the hard work they had put in during the last 12 months.

Al Kuwari said, "We have a great team of dedicated men who sacrificed so much to get this far."

"We are a strong outfit with big powerful forwards and equally as big and fast out wide. I believe come finals time we will be there," added the QRF president.

Hungary to withdraw Budapest's 2024 Olympic bid: Government

Budapest Reuters

Hungary's government announced it would withdraw Budapest's bid to host the 2024 Olympic Games, citing a lack of political and national unity behind the application that it blamed on the opposition.

Bidding alongside powerhouses Los Angeles and Paris, Budapest had been considered a long-shot candidate, pinning its hopes on the International Olympic Committee's (IOC)

Agenda 2020 initiative.

Budapest Mayor Istvan Tarlos had suggested the city might quit the race after local opponents of the bid last week submitted a quarter of a million signatures in a petition demanding a local referendum in Budapest on the issue.

"For Budapest and Hungary the Olympics is a national issue," the government said in a resolution published on national news agency MTL.

"In recent months, the earlier unity has broken down and the issue of the Olympics has turned from a national issue into a party issue. Opposition parties are responsible for this, those who backtracked on their earlier decision (to back the bid)."

The Wednesday's decision was made at a meeting between Tarlos, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the chairman of the Hungarian Olympic committee.

The IOC said it would await official notification from the national Olympic committee of the country, the only authority which can officially withdraw a bid.

The Hungarian government's decision, however, is a further blow to the Olympic bid process with Boston, Hamburg and



Traffic lights switch to red in front of a Hungarian pro-Olympics billboard with two-times sabre fencing Olympic champion Aron Szilagyi advertising the Games, billboard saying "Give it all for the Budapest Olympics" in central Budapest, Hungary yesterday.

Rome having pulled out of a race that has now been left with just two cities.

The IOC voted in a string of reforms, named Agenda 2020, two years ago in the hope of making the Games more affordable and attractive for potential host cities.

Earlier on Wednesday, Tarlos, who only began to support the bid after Agenda 2020 promised to make hosting the

Olympics more affordable, had urged a fast resolution of the issue.

"I never insisted on the Olympics," he told the city council. "There is no point dragging out this process like strudel dough."

The United States' Olympic Committee and the Olympic organisers in Los Angeles were not immediately available to comment on the Hungarian

decision. According to a survey published on Wednesday by pollster Median, half of Hungarians wanted Budapest to withdraw its bid, with only a third supporting it nationally. In Budapest, 56 percent of voters were against the bid.

Sentiment changed as a group of young professionals and students collected more than a quarter of a million signatures in a month to press for a referendum on the Olympic bid.

Their Momentum movement has burst on to Hungary's political scene to challenge Orban's government and opposition parties a year before elections in 2018.

No opposition group has had such an impact on a major issue since Orban rose to power in 2010. In targeting the Olympics, Momentum has challenged an event seen as being of symbolic importance to the prime minister.

Momentum spokesman Gergo Papp told local website Index.hu that the government had backtracked on the bid "in a cowardly manner", saying they had taken away a chance for the people to vote on the project. (Additional reporting by Krisztina Thán and Karolos Grohmann,

Ariya grabs lead on home turf at LPGA Thailand

Bangkok AFP

World number two Ariya Iutanugorn cruised to a shared lead in the first round of the Honda LPGA yesterday, eyeing a redemptive victory on her home turf.

The smooth bi-eyefree 66 came fresh off the 21-year-old's spectacular 2016 season, which saw her win five LPGA tournaments and a Player of the Year award.

It also sets the young player up for redemption on the course where she suffered a heartbreaking defeat in 2013 after losing her cool in the final round with three bogeys that forced her into second place.

LPGA THAILAND SCORES

- 66 - Ariya Iutanugorn (THA), Amy Yang (KOR)
- 67 - Shanshan Feng (CHN), Ryan O'Toole (USA), Sei Young Kim (KOR), Minjee Lee (AUS)
- 68 - Yasmine Kher (FRA), Lexi Thompson (USA), Haru Nomiya (JPN), Danielle Kang (USA), Cristie Kerr (USA)
- 69 - Eun-Hee Ji (KOR), Jessica Korda (USA), Sandra Gal (GER), Stacy Lewis (USA), So Yeon Ryu (KOR), Charley Hull (ENG), Jodi Ewart Shroff (ENG), Moriya Jutanugorn (THA), Azahara Munoz (ESP), Angela Stanford (USA)

Oilers edge out Panthers as Capitals rout Flyers

New York Agencies

NHL RESULTS			
Anaheim	5	Boston	3
Washington	4	Philadelphia	1
Edmonton	4	Florida	3

Kris Russell scored the go-ahead goal as the Edmonton Oilers ended the Florida Panthers' five-game winning streak with a 4-3 victory on Wednesday night at the BB&T Center.

Russell's goal, his first of the season, came with 12:02 left in the third period. Oscar Klefbom, Eric Gryba and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins also scored for the Oilers. Aleksander Barkov, Colton Sceviour and Jonathan Marchessault scored for the Panthers.

Capitals 4, Flyers 1 Evgeny Kuznetsov netted his second two-goal game of the season and Braden Holtby turned aside 33 of 34 shots to earn his 30th win, leading Washington over Philadelphia. Nicklas Backstrom added a goal

and an assist and TJ Oshie netted his 24th goal of the season as the Capitals halted a two-game losing streak following their bye week. Brayden Schenn scored the only goal for the Flyers, who have lost six of their last eight games.

Ducks 5, Bruins 3 Rickard Rakell's second goal of the game with 2:34 to play broke a tie and led Anaheim past Boston.

Ondrej Kase, Josh Manson and Andrew Cogliano also scored for the Ducks. Nick Ritchie and Corey Perry each added two assists, while Jonathan Bernier stopped 26 shots. Boston also got two assists from David Backes and 20 saves from Tuukka Rask.

Hamilton unveils new Mercedes W08 car

Silverstone, UK AFP

Lewis Hamilton and his new Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas unveiled the W08 car they will pilot in the 2017 Formula One season at Silverstone yesterday.

The new car has a black, silver and teal chassis and has been produced to meet new regulations intended to make F1 cars faster and more demanding to drive.

Three-time champion Hamilton gave the car a spin amid blustery conditions at Silverstone, 80 miles (129 kilometers) northwest of London, before posing for pictures alongside Bottas.

"It is the most detailed piece of machinery I have seen in F1," Hamilton said.

"This is not an actual test — it's just a few laps to make sure the car will run. But I was able to go faster in the last couple of laps."

"It feels almost identical to



Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One drivers Britain's Lewis Hamilton (left) and Finland's Valtteri Bottas (right) pose with Mercedes head Austria's Toto Wolff by the new 2017 Mercedes W08 EQ Power+ Formula One car at its launch event at Silverstone motor racing circuit near Towcester, central England yesterday.

last year's car in terms of ergonomics, but you have this bigger, more powerful beast around you."

Briton Hamilton, 32, finished second in the last year's Drivers'

Championship behind team-mate Nico Rosberg, who abruptly retired at the end of the season.

Bottas, a 27-year-old Finn, has joined from Williams to

succeed Rosberg. Mercedes will be looking to secure a fourth successive Constructors' Championship when the 2017 season begins at the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 26.



India's Wriddhiman Saha (left), Ajinkya Rahane (third left), Murali Vijay (second right) and captain Virat Kohli (right) watch as Australia's Matthew Renshaw plays a defensive shot during the first day of their first Test at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune yesterday.

Renshaw, Starc revive Australia in India Test

Pune AFP

Australia's Matt Renshaw admitted he feared he had let his teammates down by leaving the fray with an upset stomach before returning to hit a gritty half-century in the first Test against India yesterday.

In the opening day of a four-match series between the world's top two sides, Renshaw's innings and some late Mitchell Starc fireworks pulled Australia back from the brink as they reached 256 for nine at stumps.

Starc has so far made 57 off 58 balls and Josh Hazlewood was with him at the crease on one at Pune's Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium.

Indian seamer Umesh Yadav claimed four wickets while the spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja took two each.

The left-handed Renshaw was the anchor of the innings, top-scoring with 68, although it was Starc who provided the entertainment and caused a rethink in assessments of who had the better of the day.

All had seemed calm with Renshaw for most of the morning session but when David Warner fell with the scores on 82, the English-born batsman caused a stir by following his opening partner back to the pavilion.

As news filtered out that he had an upset stomach, the 20-year-old Renshaw became the talk of social

media with even the famously tough former Australian captain Allan Border weighing in.

"Hope he's lying down half-dead, because as a captain I wouldn't be happy," Border wrote on Twitter as Renshaw lay on his sick-bed.

But after Australian skipper Steve Smith fell for 27 just before the tea break, Renshaw then strode back to the crease to register his second Test fifty in his fifth game.

Renshaw said he had been feeling unwell for most of the morning and had tried to tough it out before deciding he had to let off the pitch.

"It was tough. I wasn't too sure on the ruling. I didn't know you could retire ill so I thought I just had to get out there and make sure I batted till lunch," he told reporters.

"It wasn't an ideal situation and coming back it was probably a bit strange for

First Test in Pune

▶ **Matt Renshaw returns and hits a gritty half ton after leaving the fray with an upset stomach on the first day's play in Pune.**

▶ **Renshaw's innings and late fireworks from Mitchell Starc pull Australia back from the brink as they reached 256 for nine at stumps.**

SCOREBOARD

Australia (1 Innings):	
D Warner b U Yadav	38
M Renshaw c Vijay b Ashwin	68
S Smith c Kohli b Ashwin	27
S Marsh c Kohli b Yadav	16
P Handscomb bow Jadeja	22
M Marsh bow Jadeja	4
M Wade bow U Yadav	8
M Starc (batting)	57
S O'Keefe c Saha b U Yadav	0
N Lyon bow U Yadav	0
J Hazlewood (batting)	1
Extras (lb 6, NB 0)	15
Total (for 9 wks)	256

Fall of wickets: 1-82, 2-102, 3-149, 4-149, 5-166, 6-190, 7-196, 8-205, 9-205.

Bowling: Sharma 11-0-21-0 (1nb), Ashwin 34-10-59-2, 1 Yadav 13-1-58-1 (1nb), Jadeja 24-4-74-2 (2nb), U Yadav 12-3-32-4 (1nb).

India: M Vijay, L Rahul, C Pujara, V Kohli (capt), A Rahane, W Saha, B Ashwin, R Jadeja, U Yadav, J Sharma, U Yadav.



India's Umesh Yadav (left) celebrates after the dismissal of Australia's David Warner (bottom centre) as Matthew Renshaw looks on during the first day of their first Test match played at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune yesterday.

Umesh delivers. Warner, who had tackled the Indian spinners with good feet movement, was the first of Umesh's four victims, falling to a good length delivery that hit the bat en route to stumps just before the lunch break.

"There was some movement, there was a bit of reverse swing as well. I tried to keep the ball on the up," Umesh said of Warner's wicket.

"It is a turning wicket and reverse swing is always helpful on such pitches," Lyon's dismissal meant

the visitors -- who have a dreadful recent record on the sub-continent -- had slumped from 119-1 to 205 for nine before Starc put on an unbeaten 51-run stand with Hazlewood.

Starc, better known for his fast-bowling, caught the Indian attack by surprise by carting them around the ground in a blistering innings which featured five boundaries and three sixes. It was the ninth Test fifty.

The match is the first in a four-Test series between the world's two top-ranked sides.

Pacquiao 'in negotiations' to fight Amir Khan

Manila AFP

Philippine boxing hero Manny Pacquiao yesterday said he was "in negotiations" to face British fighter Amir Khan, after weeks of conflicting reports over his next bout.

"My team and I are in negotiations with Amir Khan for our next fight. Further announcements coming soon," Pacquiao, 38, said on his official Twitter feed.

Spokesmen for Pacquiao could not be contacted for comment.

Pacquiao's Tweet follows various accounts from different sources over who he will be facing next and where the fight might be held.

Pacquiao's promoter, Top Rank's Bob Arum, told ESPN sports network that he was sceptical about a Khan fight.

"Manny seems to believe they will come up with the money. I have some reservations whether it will happen or not," American Arum was quoted as saying on the ESPN website.

Arum had been seeking a deal with Duco Events, a New Zealand promotional company he has close ties to, for Pacquiao to defend the 147-pound belt against Australia's Jeff Horn in Brisbane, Australia.

"The Australian deal is not going to happen now, because Manny is trying to get a fight done in the United Arab Emirates, and the people there favour him fighting Amir Khan," Arum reportedly said.

Since January, Arum had been widely quoted as saying the Filipino would next face Horn in April, although Pacquiao's aides insisted nothing had been confirmed.

A business adviser of the Filipino ring icon nicknamed "Pac-man" said this week that his next opponent would "most likely" be Khan in Dubai, but other aides declined to comment.

Pacquiao, the WBO welterweight champion, tweeted on February 11: "See you in UAE for my next fight. #TeamPacquiao".

He also posted a poll on his Twitter feed asking his 108,000 followers to choose either Horn, Khan, American Terence Crawford or Briton Kell Brook as his next opponent.

The poll has since been taken down. Pacquiao announced a brief retirement last year but made a successful comeback against Jessie Vargas in Las Vegas in November, saying he still felt like a youngster.

Pacquiao had said he was retiring to focus on his new role as Philippine senator, after winning elections last year on the back of his sporting fame.



Manny Pacquiao



Elena Svitolina

Svitolina poised for top 10 breakthrough

Dubai AFP

Elena Svitolina queued up a possible breakthrough into a first-time top 10 ranking as she reached the semi-finals of the Dubai Tennis Championships yesterday with a 6-0, 6-4 defeat of Lauren Davis.

The seventh seed, currently ranked 13th and winner of a fifth career title this month in Taipei, will line up on Friday against either top seed Angelique Kerber or Croatian

Ana Konjuh after those two meet in a quarter-final at the Aviation club.

Kerber can regain the WTA top ranking from Serena Williams with a trophy performance on Saturday after losing the top honour after the American won the Australian Open.

"I'm really happy the way I started and the way I finished the match. I was being very aggressive and it worked really good," said Svitolina. "I was calm and positive today. I'm really happy with the performance."

Raonic advances at Delray Beach

Miami AFP

Canadian top seed Milos Raonic advanced to the quarter-finals of the ATP Delray Beach Open on Wednesday by defeating Croatia's Borna Coric 6-3, 7-6 (7/2).

On a night when rain delayed the start of play for more than eight hours, world number four Raonic fired 12 aces on his way to victory after 94 minutes in the early minutes of yesterday morning.

Raonic, who reached the tie-breaker with his 11th ace and reached match point with his last ace, booked a Friday quarter-final matchup against British eighth seed Kyle Edmund, who outlasted Taiwan's Lu Yen-Hsun 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

Also advancing to the last eight was US third seed Jack Sock, who downed Spain's Guillermo Garcia-Lopez 6-4, 6-1, and American fifth seed Steve Johnson, who eliminated Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka by the same score.

Sock and Johnson will meet in another quarter-final.

Yesterday's matchups find Argentina's seventh-seeded Juan Martin Del Potro, in his first tournament of the year after helping his homeland win the Davis Cup, meeting Bosnia's Damir Dzumhur.

Two other second-round matches Thursday will be all-American affairs, with teen star Taylor Fritz facing Donald Young and fourth-seeded defending champion Sam Querrey meeting Jared Donaldson.

Qatar set to kick off 2017 MXGP season at Losail

The Peninsula

Top notch action is on the cards as Qatar is set to kick off the 2017 MXGP season with top riders ready for the action for today's qualifying stage at the Losail International Circuit.

The prestigious event has seen a different winner each year in the premier class. In 2013, when MXGP first tore up the hard packed soil of Qatar, it was Clement Desalle on the top step of the podium.

Then in 2015 it was dominated by Max Nagl who rode at an untouchable level, and last year the soon to be Champion of Tim Gajser started his season in winning form at Qatar.

The defending MXGP world champion, Team HRC's Gajser who put together an amazing and surprising rookie season last year, will be a top contender this year.

The young Slovenian set the world on notice in his debut appearance in the MXGP class



(From left) MXGP riders Antonio Cairoli, Kevin Strijbos, Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) President Abdulrahman Al Mannai, FIM Europe President Dr. Wolfgang Srb, Tim Gajser, Giuseppe Luongo, Jeffrey Herlings, FIM Motocross Commission Director, FIM/CMS Director Tony Skillington, LCSC Vice President and General Manager Khalid Al Remaifi, Romain Febvre, Max Nagl and Clement Desalle pose for photograph during a press conference held in Doha yesterday. The 2017 MXGP season is set to begin for the fifth year in succession at the Losail International Circuit with qualifying races lined up for today, followed by the final race tomorrow.

here in Losail last year. While everyone seems eager for the first gate drop of the season, a media opportunity was held at the Al Shaqab yesterday where top riders including Monster

Energy Kawasaki's Clement Desalle and Jordie Tixier, Suzuki World MXGP's Kevin Strijbos, Suzuki World MX2's Jeremy Seewer, Hunter Lawrence, and Bas Vaessen among others were

in attendance to look around and interact with the horses inside the center.

Later, Youthstream President Giuseppe Luongo, Losail Circuit Sports Club

Vice-President and General Manager Khalid Al Remaifi, QMMF President Abdulrahman Al Mannai, FIM/CMS Director Tony Skillington, and FIM Europe President Wolfgang Srb along with some of the biggest names for this year's racing season spoke to the media.

The QMMF president welcomed all the participants of the spectacle. "We are very excited to have the opening round for the MXGP series. The MXGP is always exciting, it is always a show. We had Tim Gajser and Herlings win here last year and go on to win the championship, we hope this year's winners will have the same luck," Al Mannai said.

Luongo praised the arrange-

SCHEDULE

Today
Studio Show: 16:15
MX2 Qualifying: 19:50
MXGP Qualifying: 20:40
Tomorrow
MX2 Race 1: 17:00
MXGP Race 2: 18:00
MX2 Race 2: 21:00
MXGP Race 2: 21:00

ments by the QMMF. "I want to thank the Losail Circuit for welcoming us here once again, and to the QMMF for the great organisation of this race, everything is perfect, everything is clean, the track is prepared very well, and we are set to have another fantastic opening to the season," he said.

Skillington was itching to have a glimpse of the action. "I'm really excited for this season, I can feel the energy already and it's very unpredictable, if I were a betting man I would know where to place my money. I think that we will be in for a fantastic season...I just can't wait to see it started," he said.

Gajser hoped his team will come victorious in the contest.

"We had a really good winter, we had a new bike from Honda and we tested a lot. I'm looking to do my best here just try to forget about the pressure and ride like I know how to and we will see come Saturday (tomorrow)," he said.

"We had a perfect run in off season, riding was good, we really dialed in the bike, I was super comfortable with bike feeling I could make a run for the championship my rookie year."



MXGP riders during their visit at Al Shaqab yesterday.

Lekhwiya regain top spot with win over Al Sailiya

The Peninsula

The first round 22 QSL fixture yesterday saw Lekhwiya regain their top spot in the Qatar Stars League (QSL) Championship with a hard-fought 2-1 win over mid-table Al Sailiya at Al Ahli's Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium.

Al Sailiya came into the game on a high following their last-gasp 2-1 win over Al Ahli last time out but left empty handed.

As for Lekhwiya, they came into the tie desperate to bounce back and head back to the top of the table after their shock 3-1 defeat to Umm Salal saw them lose the top spot to Al Sadd on goal difference.

After an opening 18 minutes which saw Lekhwiya sit



Action during the QSL match between Lekhwiya and Al Sailiya at Al Ahli's Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium yesterday.

deep in Al Sailiya's half but create a few chances, the Red Knights finally broke through and took the lead thanks to a goal from their number 19.

Al Moez Ali, Lekhwiya attacked down the right wing, where they'd been finding plenty of space, and delivered a low, whipping cross into the 18 yard box that caught Al Sailiya's defense sleeping allowing Moez to get in between the two centre backs and poke it home from just six yards out.

The rest of the first half played out much as the first 18 minutes did, with Lekhwiya sitting deep in Al Sailiya's half.

The Red Knights were unable to add to their opener though despite being awarded a penalty on the 35th minute after.

Al Sailiya's goalkeeper Gomis produced a fine save

low to his right after he guessed which way Lekhwiya's goal scoring machine, Yousef El Arabi, was going with the shot. Lekhwiya headed into the tunnel with just a one goal lead that should have been more.

Al Sailiya came out looking like a different team in the second half and had long spells pressed deep into Lekhwiya's half.

On the 50th minute they were unlucky not to equalise after they had a flurry of shots cleared off the line by Lekhwiya's stretched defense, with Al Sailiya's Marius Lazar having back to back shots cleared.

The tide soon turned in the favour of Lekhwiya though as they stepped up a gear. After ten minutes of second half play, their captain Mohamed Moosa somehow managed to miss from just two yards out

in what may be the miss of the season.

Luckily for him, just minutes later Yousef El Arabi found the back of the net to bag his 22nd goal of the season. Lekhwiya managed to beat the offside trap and deliver a cross from the right wing into the 18 yard box where El Arabi was waiting and able to stab home from just six yards out.

Al Sailiya tried desperately to get back into the game and got one back on the 83rd minute when halftime substitute Maderer hammered one from the edge of the 18 yard box with a fine finish.

Al Sailiya weren't able to find a second and nab a pint though and Lekhwiya leave top of the QSL table.

In other match yesterday, Mualther collected full points, beating Umm Salal 1-0 at Seham bin Hamad Stadium.

Al Sadd target full points against struggling Al Khor

The Peninsula

Al Sadd are eyeing full points against Al Khor today as they enter the round 21 of the prestigious Qatar Stars League (QSL) at Al Khor Stadium today.

Al Sadd are three points with league leaders Lekhwiya. The Wolves will be hunting for the three points in order to push for the title.

But, Jesualdo Ferreira, the head coach of Al Sadd, said his team was targeting a good display.

"We have to be ready to play teams that are focused on defending. We have 5 final games left so we have to focus on our team rather than other teams."

Speaking about returning players, Ferreira added: "Ibrahim Majeed and Mohammed Ismail are coming back. I am very pleased to see them coming back and I don't know the reason for their suspension."

"Pressure is good and positive for my team... it's a good challenge for the players who will learn from this especially newer players. For me pressure is good and important as it keeps us on our toes," added the Portuguese tactician.

Meanwhile, Al Khor are eleventh in the table with twenty points and are embroiled in a fight to avoid relegation.

The Knights will be looking to provide a strong performance against a very strong opposition. Jean Fernandez, the Head Coach of Al Khor, knows the importance of this match: "It a very big team and a very big match. They were far away from Lekhwiya but now are level with Lekhwiya."

"In attack we are having many opportunities but we are missing them. Now we are in a difficult situation but we will try to provide a good performance as we have done against them before," he added.

"We don't have any problem with performances but the main problem is missing opportunities. We have to work on our efficiency because if you miss opportunities and concede goals it's a big problem," added the Frenchman at the press conference yesterday.

He also spoke about the importance of the final few matches in the league.

"The match against Al Sadd will be different from the relegations battles we have coming up. Al Sadd is a more complicated match... most importantly after the Sadd match is Shahanyia and Al Wakrah and these matches will be more important in our fight for survival."



Al Sadd's Bagdad Bounedjah (centre) celebrates after scoring one of his three goals during El Clasico against Al Rayyan at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in this December 2016 file photo.

Qatar Stars League: Round 22

RESULTS

Lekhwiya bt Al Sailiya 2-1 at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium
Mualther bt Umm Salal bt 1-0 at Seham bin Hamad Stadium (7:00pm)

TODAY

Al Khor vs Al Sadd at Al Khor Stadium (4:50pm)
Al Rayyan vs Al Gharafa at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium (7:00pm)

TOMORROW

El Jishi vs Al Ahli at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium (4:50pm)
Al Arabi vs Al Wakrah at Grand Hamad Stadium (4:50pm)
Al Shahania vs Al Kharayyif at Grand Hamad Stadium (7:00pm)